

Six weapons in the fight against forgers

By Roger Boye 155

SOME COIN collectors believe that powerful electronic microscopes and other expensive equipment are needed to protect themselves against being swindled by coin forgers.

Not so, says Ed Fleischmann, who has seen hundreds of forged coins in his job as an authenticator for the American Numismatic Association's Certification Service (ANACS).

Fleischmann explained how coin forgers often will change the date or mint mark on a common date coin to make it appear as a rare date. And they often are successful in selling their wares simply because the collectors didn't use some common sense when buying the coin.

"The first thing I say is to watch out for the bargains. So many people forget this and buy a coin because it is cheap," Fleischmann said. Often, it is the fake coin.

He also had three other suggestions:

- Buy the proper coin books and study them. A collector can't have too many books.

- Don't jump to conclusions when buying coins. A collector shouldn't automatically assume a coin is genuine just because it looks nice.

- Study coins in your pocket with a strong magnifying glass and learn about the minting process. Fleischmann said it is important for a collector to know what happens when a coin is created so as to know what to look for when trying to decide if a coin is authentic. Comparing

a suspect coin with another you know to be genuine is a good way to detect counterfeits.

Other experts also might mention a fifth rule of thumb: Know the person or dealer with whom you do business, or patronize well-established dealers.

An almost sure-fire way to determine if a coin is authentic is to send it to ANACS. Fleischmann or John Hunter, the other authenticator, will examine it, using sophisticated equipment, die records, etc. If the coin is found to be authentic, a certificate and picture of the coin are sent. If the coin is a fake, the owner is so told.

For forms and schedule of fees (about 3 per cent of a coin's value), write ANACS, 818 N. Cascade Av., Colorado Springs, Colo. 80903.